



THE BELL TOWER



“PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD
JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS”

Vol. 61 No. 4

East Rockaway, N.Y.

April 2021



Dates to Remember:

(When things get back to Normal.)

May 1...Jewelry/Yard Sale

May 9... Mother's Day

May 13... Ascension Thursday

May 16...Corporate Meeting (zoom)

May 31...Memorial Day

June 14...Flag Day

June 20...Father's Day

(Summer begins)

July 4...Independence Day

September 6...Labor Day

September 7...Rosh Hashanah

September 11... Patriot Day

(20 Years!)

September 12...Grandparents Day

Bethany Friends and especially Members

Your presence is requested at our annual Bethany Corporate Meeting. This meeting votes on the roster of new church officers and committees as well as the new budget. I look forward to seeing you there on Zoom!

Bethany Corporate Meeting: May 16, 2021 12:30 PM

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81284367373?pwd=M01DUTRzVjI4Tkhka2Q3NGNkQUc2UT09>

Meeting ID: 812 8436 7373

Passcode: 077335

One tap mobile: +19292056099,,81284367373#,,,,*077335# US
(New York)

Christ is Risen!

As we like to say on Easter Sunday, “Christ is Risen!” He is risen indeed! The Lord has broken the power of sin and death and we are free from the bondage to those faults and failures that keeps our eyes on the ground, our noses to the grindstone and most importantly that has put fear on the throne where only love is fit to rule. In other words, Jesus has opened the gates to the reign of Christ, the kin-dom of God. We are no longer doomed by our mistakes and our failings, however petty or grievous, we no longer need to be enslaved by our fears, by our prejudices or by that which has been inflicted upon us by laws, practices and customs that do not operate in the service of the reign of Christ, a reign in which, because of Christ’s resurrection is hanging wide open, beckoning us to a new and better way of being in communion with our sisters and brothers and all of our fellow creatures.

Of course, we look around us, or turn on the news, and we can see that human misery is in no more short supply than it has ever been. With this virus, its many variants, not to mention the economic, psychological, and spiritual hardship of this past year, many of us are struggling with challenges we have not faced in the past. The struggle to do all the things we have had to learn to do this year to maintain ourselves is staggering and for some of us, exhausting, even depressing, as it reinforces our feelings of being at the mercy of forces we cannot control, in over our head in a tide that may be rising or it may be falling, we just don’t know in a world that seems perpetually on the brink of some fresh disaster.

Even as we celebrated the resurrection, encouraged by the good news of vaccine rollouts and the coming of the warmth of Spring, many of us are just starting, like veterans of any disaster, to realize symptoms of PTSD, depression, and stress related disorders. A lot of us are

beginning to ask ourselves what we are missing, if Jesus broke the power of sin and death, why are we surrounded by them? If Jesus gave us the law of love, went to the cross, rose again, and evil has been shown for the illusion it is, why haven’t we realized the promise of the resurrection? Where is the reign of Christ, the kin-dom of God?

Fair question. But one that Jesus answered when he said: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” The reign of Christ is already here, made manifest in every act of kindness, every time the people of God demonstrate their willingness to imitate the example of our Savior. Jesus said to those with ears to hear. This is not some rigid call to a particular denomination or religion, it is a call for us to follow, to find the will to pick up our crosses and guided by the Great Commandments, the communion of the saints, and the workings of the Holy Spirit to put down our weapons, lay our sins and our sorrows at the foot of Christ and to give ourselves, our will, and our lives over to the care of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus broke down the gate, but we have to get up, hoist up our crosses and walk through it together. None of us will get there alone, or by our own efforts, we need God, and we need each other. Whether it’s the good people of Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson or the shelf stackers at the Food Mart or the friends and family who give us a reason to get our shot, earn our bread and do the things that we have to do to make life better for us all.

Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, the people of God hid in a room and prayed. They were overwhelmed, only vaguely cognizant of what was going on, and sure only that Jesus had given them an impossible task,

the salvation of the world. On Pentecost, that Spirit came upon them and they became prophets, evangelists, and teachers, spreading the Good News of Christ's Resurrection throughout the world and creating communities of grace, new lives based in hope, faith, and love. They understood what too many people today seem to have forgotten: that ours is a transformative faith, a challenge to the way we have been taught to live, not a pillar of, but a challenge to the ways and wisdom of the world and that we are not called to sit and wait upon the Lord to save us, not to create the reign of God for us, but to point us to salvation, to lead us to justice, compassion and new life through our struggles, not despite them. The gate to the kin-dom of God is open. We must find the will to step up and walk through.

Of course, as anyone who ever tried to quit smoking can tell you, "just say no," or "just do it," is seldom a reality for God's complicated children. The hardest part for us is never solving the problem or even reaching for the brass ring. It is our eyes that for so many reasons, will not see what is often right in front of us. It is our ears, deafened by the cacophony of noise, the opinions screamed in our faces from our TV's and even our friends,

the baggage of past allegiances and the terror of letting go of comforting illusions even when they no longer serve even that. Let's face it, this "will-to step up" is nothing of the kind. No simple adjustment in our life's journey, it is, a part of this process of transformation that we begin to realize through intentionality, through prayer, and most importantly in communion with our fellow disciples, through whom the Holy Spirit speaks to us, corrects us without malice and embraces us as we are, so that together we may become whom God willed us to be. We work and pray and support each other and our struggles, our kinks, our flaws, we carry each other when we need to, kick each other when that is called for, and together we begin to understand what it means to be a part of the reign of God. No one does it alone. No one always gets it right. Everyone stumbles and everyone wonders occasionally what the point of this is. To those people Christ says, "Keep coming. You'll get it. You'll see."

Have a blessed Spring!

Pastor Mark



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BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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***Statements made in editorials, signed articles or letters, do not represent an official position in this church.
Persons with differing opinions are invited to expres their views in letters to the editor.***

Are you less than perfect? Welcome! We are a community or imperfect people (including but not restricted to): squirming children and their harried parents, happy and sad people, people with challenges, seniors, young people, middle aged folks, people of every race, poor people, rich people, in between people, LGBT and straight people, true believers, seekers, agnostics, odd and ordinary people, extraordinary people, un-churched and unsure people, people with disabilities, hypocrites, saints, sinners and everybody else. Because no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here just as you are!



Greetings from your Bethany Moderator

In peace, Janet Moser, Bethany Moderator

April Greetings!

Did you hear? There's a big late season snowstorm coming our way. Could be up to 18 inches! April Fools!

Good old April Fools' Day. Whether you are the prankster, the victim, or the person who does their best to ignore the whole thing, April Fools' Day seems to be here to stay. Where did it come from? How did it begin? Good questions. I'm glad you asked.

I did a little research on this, librarian that I am, and discovered on **History.com** some interesting information to share with you.

April Fools' Day, traditionally celebrated on April 1st or thereabouts, has been around for a few centuries. That's a lot of pranking! It also existed across a few different cultures. That 'joke' factor must be in the human genome. That said, no one really knows the exact origin of this crazy annual event. Here are some theories.

It is speculated that this all began back in 1582 when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. The Julian calendar started the new year around April 1st, in conjunction with the vernal/spring equinox. The new Gregorian calendar, which we use today, begins the new year with January 1st. Well, we know how resistant to change people can be. Perhaps they simply hadn't received the heads up. Whatever the reason, those folks who held onto the old and still celebrated the new year in April became the target of many a joke and prank. They were called...wait for it.... "April fools"! A common prank they endured was having a paper fish placed on their back. It symbolized a young, easily caught fish and by extension, a gullible person. Check your backs, everyone!

Another April Fools' Day association is to the festival called Hilaria. No, I did not make this up. Hilaria, which means joyful in Latin, was a celebration of ancient Rome. People would dress up in disguises and mock others including magistrates. This was thought to be inspired by the Egyptian legends of Isis, Osiris, and Seth. Hysterical, right? Hmmm

Aless bizarre theory tags this celebration of sorts to the vernal equinox. As we well know, early spring weather is very unpredictable. Is spring really here or is winter holding on. I guess with this one, the joke is all on us. Thanks, Mother Nature.

Britain grabbed hold of April Fools' Day in a big way in the 18th century. Got to love those Brits and their droll sense of humor. They made it last two days. Day one was "hunting the gowk" in which people were sent out on phony errands. Day two was Tallie Day which focused on putting prank signs on peoples' bottoms – fake tails or even "kick me" signs.

April Fools' Day is still going strong in our contemporary world. In 1957, the BBC reported the Swiss having a record spaghetti crop! IN 1992, NPR ran a hoax spot with Richard Nixon (not really), stating a run for president again. I remember the next one, do you? In 1996, Taco Bell claimed they were buying the Liberty Bell and renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell!

It's crazy. It's fun. It's April! Join in the silliness but please, keep it kind.

FROM THE TRUSTEES:

If you would like to attend any Sunday, please call the office during the week so that Maryanne can reserve you a seat or two. If you cannot attend services, please remember to send in your donations to the office. Thank you.

If all goes well, we will have a new nursery school downstairs by September. It will be run by Sandra Colero. It will be called *The Little Village Day Care*. More information will be provided as we get closer.

Yours in Christ, Richard Eaves

BOOK REVIEW

By Lou Gaspari

The Four Winds By Kristen Hannah

If you wish to read a book that would make you cry, this is the one that will certainly deliver full force. This novel is set during the great depression of the 1930's and it is literally a master class in taking every horrible, sad and terrible thing that could possibly happen to you.

One thing which is obvious is that American history books will never tell you how wretched our country was during this period of time. The story is told basically through Elsa and her daughter Loreda and the great pain and suffering that they go through after the dust bowl and their journey to California and the bleakness of life that they had to endure merely to survive. At this point I must state that Hannah's novel greatly resembles John Steinbeck's great novel The Grapes of Wrath. The difference is that The Four Winds is written through feminine eyes. In actuality, the only

men in Hannah's book are total losers and have very little depth. This novel is well written and the storms and the suffering are so real that it actually makes you feel that you are there. The ending of the book provides you no solutions and to be honest overly melodramatic.

My conclusion is that The Four Winds is a great page turner, but is a heavy brutal read.



BOOK CLUB

Tuesdays, beginning March 2nd, 7:00 p.m.

Weekly Book Club,

Led by Pastor Mark - via ZOOM.

If interested, please contact the Office at 516-599-5768.

FROM THE EDITOR:

Condolences to the family of Mary George. You may contact the family at:
Eddie & Kim George, 170 Fairview Chapel Road, Birdsboro, PA 19508



MISSIONS COMMITTEE:

Church World Service Hygiene Kits:

Due to the ongoing pandemic and our need for social distancing, this year instead of physically preparing Hygiene Kits, we will be asking you to contribute the cost of a Hygiene Kit, or \$15.00, for each kit.

As shared by Matthew Stevens, Director of Congregational Giving at CWS –

"Together, we can continue to give hope to our neighbors around the world who need it most:

- Communities where families are fleeing violence and harsh climates
- Communities trying to rebuild after a disaster
- Communities where our homeless brothers and sisters lack access to things we, so often, take for granted like a washcloth and toothbrush
- Communities where instead of focusing on learning, children are worried about how to get supplies they need for school

"Hope is powerful—and in times like these, it's necessary. In the grand scheme of things, it may seem like these kits are insignificant, but let me assure you, they are more meaningful than you can imagine; and the hope they represent is immeasurable. By supporting CWS Kits, you're turning hope into action.. ..."

Together let us continue providing hope for tomorrow. Please send your donations to Bethany Congregational Church, 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY 11518. Make your checks payable to "Church World Service" and put the word "Kits" in the memo area of the check.



The Thrift Shop is OPEN!! Fridays and Saturdays 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

WOMEN'S LEAGUE:

The Women's League is having a Jewelry/Yard sale on **Saturday, May 1st from 10-3.** (Rain date Saturday, May 8th.) If you would like to donate items, please drop off the morning of the yard sale; preferably before 10:00.

We are renting tables to members only-\$20 per table. Members can sell their own items at their table. Please reserve a table with Maryanne Walling or Cathy Clarke.

Hope to see you there!

TROOP 121:

As we are returning from the Easter and Passover holidays, Troop 121 is getting right back into the scouting program by planning for a day at camp practicing our scouting skills. On our day trip we will be practicing fire building, having a cooking contest and performing a campfire program. These skills will be put to use next month during our day of competition within the troops in May. More to come about that day...

Ethan G is beginning the process of planning his Eagle Scout project. His project will take place at Tanglewood Nature Reserve and will contribute to the growth and beautification of the reserve.

Eagle scout, Matt R., lead his Eagle project in October. He has fulfilled a need in an NYC school for very useful tools in creating therapy boxes used by children with Autism. Congratulations to Matt for a great job in completing his Eagle project and achieving the Rank of Eagle. Bully!

On April 10th we will have our Brotherhood Day for those scouts and scouters in the Order of the Arrow who will be fulfilling their obligation to advance to Brotherhood membership from Ordeal member. This year the ceremony will be held close to home in Baldwin at the Baldwin Scout House. This advancement deepens the commitment of cheerful service and is taken after the completion of 10 months of Ordeal membership. Bully to all those candidates accepting this challenge!

SOME "GIGGLES" TO HELP YOU THRU THE DAY

courtesy of Don Gillies

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

You mean there's something stronger than duct tape?

Man Struck By Lightning: Faces Battery Charge

He probably IS the battery charge!

New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group

Weren't they fat enough?!

Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft

That's what he gets for eating those beans!

Kids Make Nutritious Snacks

Do they taste like chicken?



Spring Jewelry & Yard Sale

Saturday, May 1st

10:00 A.M. — 3:00 P.M

(Rain Date: May 8th)

The women of Bethany will be holding their Spring Yard Sale.

There's always *"Something for Everyone"*

See you at the Sale!



Bethany Congregational Church, 100 Main Street
East Rockaway, NY 11518, Church Office: 516-599-5768

(No Vendors Please)



SCREEN TIME ON THE RISE...

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR EYES

In today's new normal, you and your children are most likely spending more time on mobile devices and computer screens than ever before. Limiting the amount of time spent using screens can be difficult, especially with work related Zoom meetings, remote learning, Facetime calls, video game playing and Netflix streaming. So how does all of this screen time affect your eyes?

Computer use stresses the eyes more than reading a book or magazine because it is harder to maintain focus on computer-generated images than on printed images. This is especially true for young children, whose visual systems are not fully developed. With the increase in screen time, there has been a tremendous jump in dry eyes, digital eye strain, headaches and other issues. The good news is that these conditions are easily preventable and reversible!

Try these steps to help protect your family's eyes:

Adopt the 20-20-20 Rule: The American Academy of Ophthalmology and Vision council recommends every 20 minutes you should look at an object that is at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This reduces eyestrain by giving your eyes a break by focusing on something further away.

Get Outdoors: When you no longer need to be on a device, go outside. The more time you (especially children) spend outside, the less likely it is that you will develop eye health concerns.

Use Artificial Tears: Artificial tears may be helpful for those who have eye dryness associated with prolonged use of electronics. (For children, consult pediatrician.)

BLINK ! : Studies show that we blink much less often during screen time than we normally do, which can lead to dry eyes and eye strain. Try to remind yourself to blink at the end of every sentence to keep dry eyes at bay.

Block the Blue Light: Research points to a clear link between blue light from screen time in the evening hours and poor sleep quality. Lenses with blue-blocking filters can avoid this problem. An alternative is to go to the settings on all of your devices and utilize the night mode to decrease blue light emissions and get a better night's sleep.

***If you do not find relief from eye strain easily, please be sure to consult an eye care professional!!*

(Information excerpts from Newsday.com 8/11/2020 article by Jennifer Berger)

Wishing You a Wealth of Health!!

Submitted by Carol Henck

The Thrift Shop is OPEN!! Fridays and Saturdays 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS:

- Space is now available for advertising. (No more full or half pages)
- Reasonably priced. (1/8 page....\$200.00/month; 1/4 page ...\$300.00/month)
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- Business expense deduction (Perhaps a charitable deduction?)

Contact our editor: Charles D'Agostino

cjdagostino@gmail.com or

Call or text: 516-721-8885 for all of the details.

Thank you.



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THRIFTique

We are pleased to announce that the Thrift Shop at Bethany Congregational Church located at 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY, is open for business once again. Our hours are Friday and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Entry of people will be limited to few at a time, temperatures will be taken, hand sanitizer and masks must be used and social distancing will be put into practice to help keep both customers and staff healthy and safe.

We carry many items in our shop and there's something for everyone!

Looking forward to seeing friends
- old and new - real soon!



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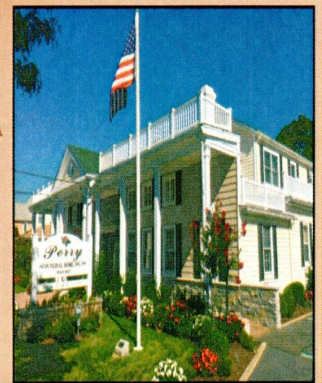
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Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie